

## Standard Findings and Areas for Innovation and Improvement

# Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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### Standard 1: Mission and Goals

#### Findings

- SUNY New Paltz has clearly defined mission and goals developed collaboratively by faculty, staff, and administration.
- Publicized internally and externally, the mission instills a sense of shared purpose and identity and drives the campus's daily activities.
- The mission drives the Strategic Plan, which centers on students and what we intend to accomplish. We have used the Strategic Plan to set priorities, allocate resources, measure progress, and evaluate options.
- Recognizing that continued investment in key campus goals is critical to continued institutional success and renewal, and that increased support from New York State is unlikely in the near future, the official launch of a comprehensive capital campaign will prove an important component of the College's financial health.
- Assessment conducted through the lens of the mission helps us to gauge our effectiveness and helps assure our ongoing health and well-being.

#### Area for Innovation and Improvement

- It would be beneficial for the College to undertake a review of the mission, as the last comprehensive review was completed in 1997.

### Standard 2: Ethics and Integrity

#### Findings

- The College is committed to academic and intellectual freedom, free speech, and intellectual property rights. It adheres to guidance set forth in SUNY and campus policy documents while providing resources for clarification to students and employees.
- The campus is committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and to support these efforts has developed an infrastructure committed to recruiting, retaining, and graduating students from historically underrepresented groups.
- Grievance policies and procedures for students, faculty, and staff are well established, clearly articulated, and readily available. Where such policies relate to employee relations, HRDI ensures adherence to the terms of negotiated contracts.
- Clear policies, documentation, and training related to conflicts of interest are available to all employees on campus.
- Evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation practices are clearly established by written procedures and provided for in various labor contract provisions.
- New Paltz's information is transparent and easily accessible to students and parents; we work diligently to educate students on financial aid options and to keep costs and fees low.
- The campus keeps careful records of its compliance with all requirements and regulations.
- Ongoing assessment at the College ensures that there is a continual examination of our practices and procedures.

#### Areas for Innovation and Improvement

- Although the College is committed to enhancing the diversity of our staff and the State has supported these efforts through our inclusion in the PRODiG program, we should pursue opportunities to improve employee diversity, equity, and inclusion. New and creative ways to hire and retain a diverse faculty and staff should be explored and piloted.
- In order to understand better why some faculty leave the College, we continue to search for an optimal way to obtain pertinent information through exit interviews.
- Cost-saving measures for textbook choices and open educational resources may provide opportunities to lower the cost of textbooks and course materials for students. Interested parties will gather more information about effective practices, which may differ according to discipline and student needs. Continued scrutiny of course fees is another means of containing overall costs of attendance. Efforts to reduce costs for students must remain an institutional priority.

## Standard 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Experience

### Findings

- SUNY New Paltz offers students a rigorous and coherent curriculum created through careful development, ongoing assessment, and periodic revision.
- Student learning experiences are structured and synthetic, from the GE program that introduces undergraduate students to disciplines and ways of thinking, to graduate programs focused on preparing students for professional career paths.
- The College is committed to student-centered teaching, including internships, fieldwork, capstone experiences, student-faculty research, honors and graduate theses, and other high-impact practices.
- Despite some gains, the College remains highly reliant on contingent faculty instruction.
- Faculty teaching online have significant opportunities for support in developing and delivering courses effectively.

### Areas for Innovation and Improvement

- Recruitment and retention of faculty of color is a challenge for the College. Despite recent successes, efforts should continue to secure colleagues of color.
- New Paltz should develop a system to recognize and compensate faculty who mentor or supervise high-impact learning experiences such as fieldwork, internships, independent studies, honors theses, and graduate theses. These forms of supervision are not currently factored into most faculty workloads.

## Standard 4: Support of the Student Experience

### Findings

- The campus has the infrastructure to provide academic and career support services.
- Information related to admissions, financial aid, and academic support are available in clear, easily accessible forms.
- Major changes in our advising and academic support, including creating the CSS and adopting the Degree Works and Starfish platforms, are the result of methodical assessment and focused responses to those assessments.
- The College follows FERPA and SUNY-wide record retention policies; we regularly train employees, and update procedures and technologies to safeguard student records.

### Areas for Innovation and Improvement

- The College should consider creating an additional one-stop web portal for helpful student services and information beyond the classroom such as OASIS, HAVEN, legal counsel, the Student Crisis Fund, housing information, the food pantry, etc.
- The College should consider ways to increase support for student mental health needs.

## Standard Five: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

### Findings

- SUNY New Paltz has clearly articulated educational goals at the institutional and program levels that are interrelated with one another and align with the College's mission. Student achievement and success are advanced through assessment of these educational goals.
- Campus constituents are actively involved in assessment of educational effectiveness. Assessment is integrated into educational offerings, student services, and processes concerned with faculty teaching and student learning.
- Across the board, this self-study found evidence of the continued evolution and growth of an authentic culture of assessment that blends "top down" and "grass roots" operational structures.
- Assessment processes are organized and systematic; assessment has evolved into a living process, independent of external accountability requirements.
- The College has a strong commitment to nurturing a culture of assessment that involves multiple stakeholders making decisions about student experience, satisfaction, and learning; they use assessment data to enhance student achievement, engagement, and success.
- Our recently revised GE program benefited from the findings of assessment, as did the revised GE Assessment Plan. This reflects the value placed on the use of assessment data.

### Area for Innovation and Improvement

- The newly implemented GE assessment protocols should be monitored, reviewed, and adjusted as necessary.

## Standard Six: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

### Findings

- Since the previous self-study, assessment-driven improvements have been made in our strategic planning processes and structures. The Strategic Plan and Essential Initiatives developed through broad-based consultative processes guide our planning and resource allocation through assessments that link and use data.
- Administrative and academic units engage in cycles of continuous improvement through implementation of assessment plans that link to the Strategic Plan's Essential Initiatives.
- The College has integrated the functions of strategic planning and assessment and has begun to use the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for strategic planning.
- Planning for development of an academic strategic plan has begun under our Interim Provost and will, we expect, continue when a new Provost is in place.
- The fiscal health of our institution is the result of sound strategic planning, careful shepherding and use of resources, and alignment of planning and resource allocation with our mission and Strategic Plan.
- In the context of New Paltz's constrained budget, strategic planning and assessment have been vital in ensuring focused investments that advance the institutional mission and goals, enabling the College not only to improve its programs and services but also to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.
- The College budget is driven by assessment data and incorporates input from the College community, where appropriate.
- The College is transparent in sharing budgetary information and institutional data.
- The Office of Institutional Research systematically collects and shares a wide range of data that support strategic planning and assessment.

### Areas for Innovation and Improvement

- An academic strategic plan would augment the College's Strategic Plan and enable more nimble responses to opportunities to develop innovative programs. Creating such a plan through broad-based consultation should be a top priority for the next Provost. The Interim Provost has begun a process for developing an academic plan to guide the new Provost.
- The Budget Advisory Committee, developed in FY2018-2019, may aid in developing the criteria for future assessments of the budgeting and resource allocation process.
- Efforts should continue to integrate the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to institutional priorities of diversity and inclusion and sustainability, more fully into every component of strategic planning.

## Standard Seven: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

### Findings

- The College is well administered: the College Council takes an appropriate role in providing oversight and consultation; the College President and his administrators are qualified for their positions and operate according to transparent and established procedures.
- The formal strategic planning process instituted since our previous self-study has been integrated with assessment and is central to decision making. Adding two members to the President's Cabinet has increased the effectiveness of the senior leadership team and enabled significant progress in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion and in developing a culture of philanthropy.
- The concerted actions of governance at multiple levels have been effective agents of positive change and institutional improvement. The 2017 revision of the faculty governance system has increased engagement of faculty in shared governance. Faculty perceptions of the effectiveness of faculty governance and shared governance have improved, though workloads continue to be an obstacle to engagement in faculty governance.
- Student representatives meet regularly with Cabinet. Student governance has clearly outlined policies and procedures; representatives are proactive in assessing and improving their governance structures.
- Planning for a process to develop an academic plan has begun under our Interim Provost and will, we expect, continue once a new Provost is in place.

### Areas for Innovation and Improvement

- Recent reorganization and re-definition of the Provost's duties and reporting structures should improve stability in that position and must be monitored for effectiveness.
- Although the process for empanelling members is not under the control of the campus, a full complement of members should be in place in advance of the next presidential search. The current College Council has only five external members and is led by an interim chair.